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Democratic "Missile Gap" Issue Flopping

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Washington, Feb. 3. — The Democratic gamble on making a major issue out of the "missile gap" doesn't seem to have caught fire.

Despite the strong testimony in Washington by top generals in the army and air force and top admirals in the navy about the troubles they have been having beefing up the defense effort, criticism of administration military policy has been pretty well restricted to congress.

The lawmakers themselves have armed services and space somewhat surprised by the committee and, now, by a special sub-committee of the senate headed by Sen. Henry M. Jackson of Washington.

The strategy for seems comparatively simple from the Democrats' point of view, to pile up mountains of testimony from the leading military officials in the know and make it so conclusive that no amount of protesting by the White House will change public opinion.

This strategy takes the form of hearings by the senate pre-arranged and "spoke" panels headed by Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, himself a presidential hopeful, by the

...and his post-war leadership of the North Atlantic Treaty organization forces. This last is the key. All that falls under the weight of the warnings and pleas uttered by the uniformed service experts to congress, plus the "leaked" reports C.I.A. Director Dulles has transmitted, then the Republicans may find themselves in serious trouble in the presidential election.

President Eisenhower told his news conference Thursday that Vice President Nixon saw the arms message to congress in advance because he was going to have to defend administration arm policy in the campaign.

The same is true of defense. President Eisenhower's sudden trip to Cape Canaveral, coming as it did, right after heated congressional attacks on the defense situation, seemed designed to soothe public fears. It was obviously too short to permit him any detailed personal filling in on the missile activities.

Yet, with all the discussion and the obvious sensitivity of the Republicans in congress to the Democratic attacks on defense policy, the constitution has remained relatively complacent.

Rep. Samuel H. Hargrett, D., Schenectady, a member of the house armed services committee, who fought strongly against the transfer of the Wrentham von Braun-led Redstone missile team to civilian control, says he has not received any mail on the defense issue.

New York Republican Sen. Jacob K. Javits and Kenneth D. Keating are surprised at the very small flow of communication on the subject since this is a big issue.

One congressional staffer maintains that the issue is too complex for people to grasp easily and, therefore, will never produce much reaction.

It could be sparked by another Soviet success in outer space.

So far, though, the reported figures showing the wide lead Russia has in long-range missiles and how that lead is likely to grow unless the U.S. boys up its effort haven't caused any significant reaction with the general public.

For the moment the president's prestige has overridden the generals' testimony.

The Democrats in congress seem determined to vote more money for defense than the administration has sought. If they

reports of Mr. Dulles' testimony published by columnist Joseph Alsop, Republican Senate Leader Everett M. Dirksen merely denounced its getting into print.

The most widely held theory here is that the office of Senator Johnson was responsible for getting the Dulles testimony to Mr. Alsop.

But the Democrats are still a pretty frustrated lot, for all the headlines they have been getting from the general's testimony. And they have had plenty of ammunition.

Strategic Air Command Chief Thomas Power has declared the U.S. is desperately behind in long-range missiles.

Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh Burke says the navy must have another six Polaris submarines, which will cost another \$575 million.

Army Chief of Staff Lyman Lemnitzer says his service isn't getting the help it needs.

The navy's research base claims budget cutbacks have robbed him of the effort he needs to progress.

In the face of all this, the president has pulled on three things:

The testimony of Defense Secretary Thomas G. Gates Jr. that the U.S. is still militarily superior to Russia and there is no reason for concern.

The testimony of Gen. Nathan P. Twining, chairman of the service chiefs are unnecessarily alarmed and the U.S. defense ef-

...they may be bailing the administration out of a hole because the Republicans can capitalize on the effort the G.O.P. makes with funds provided mainly through a Democratic-controlled congress.

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